

THOUGHTS

UPON

INFANT-BAPTISM.

EXTRACTED

FROM A LATE WRITER.



L O N D O N:

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INFANT-BAPTISM.



THE Baptism of Infants has been a troublesome dispute almost ever since the Reformation : but I shall only rehearse a few arguments commonly used to vindicate the practice of baptizing children.

I. *The Covenant made with Abraham, and his seed, Gen. xvii. is the Covenant of Grace; it includes, and was designed to extend to all Believers. When God promised to be a GOD to Abraham, and to his seed, St. Paul assures us, that by Abraham's seed is meant all that should imitate the faith of Abraham, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, Gal. iii. 7. Know ye therefore, that they who are of the faith, the same are the children of Abraham, ver. 29. If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*

The same spiritual promises, and blessings, which belonged to the church under the Old Testament, belong also to it under the New, Acts ii. 39. 2 Cor. i. 20. Abraham is represented as the root, or stock of the visible church, Rom xi. 16, 17, &c. The Jewish church are the natural
A 2 *branches*

branches of it ; the *Gentiles* are *ingrafted* into the *same stock*, ver. 17, 24. and partake of the blessings of it.

From these texts (and many others might easily be produced) it seems evident, that the *Jewish* and the *Christian Church* are but one and the same visible church in a continued succession, though under different administrations, and ordinances.

II. The *Covenant* made with *Abraham*, and with *his seed*, is *still in force*. This is implied in what has been already said : but it ought to be particularly considered. It is plainly asserted by the Apostle, *Gal. iii. 17*. To the same purpose the Apostle speaks in *Rom. iv. 14, 16*. Here he declares, that the promise made to *Abraham*, is not made of *none effect*, or abolished, but is sure to all believers in *all ages*.

Ever since GOD called the family of *Abraham*, and settled his visible church in it, He never suffered it to fail. It was an *everlasting Covenant* that he made with *Abraham*, to be his GOD, and the GOD of his seed, *Gen. xvii. 7*. that he might be the father both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who were brought into the church, as in *Rom. iv. 11, 16*.

III. The *children of the Jews* were visible members of the *Jewish church* under the covenant of *Abraham*, and as such they were acknowledged, and received into it by circumcision, as the door of entrance, *Gen. xvii. 9—14*.

IV. The *children of christians* were never cut off from this privilege, when their fathers were received into the church, whether they were *Jews* or *Gentiles* ; and therefore they are members of the *christian church* also, under spiritual promises, and blessings. When the *Jews*, the *natural branches*, were cut off from the good olive-tree, their *little buds* were cut off with them also ; and when

when the *Gentiles* by a profession of faith were grafted in, as *foreign* branches, their *little buds* were grafted in with them. *Christ* received the children that were brought by their parents, and laid his hands on them, and blessed them, and said, *of such is the kingdom of heaven*, Matt. x. 13—16. The promises of the Old Testament, wherein children are included in some of the prophets, do refer to the *Gentile* church, as well as the *Jewish*, *Isai.* xlv. 3, 5. *Isa* lxxv. 23. *Joel* ii. 28, 29. For it is the blessing of Abraham, which reaches to his seed, that comes upon the *Gentiles* through *Jesus Christ*, *Gal.* iii. 14. *Rom.* xv. 8, 9. that the *Gentiles* may glorify *GOD* for his mercy.

V. *Baptism* is now (like circumcision of old) the sign of God's covenant. This is plainly intimated by the Apostle in *Gal.* iii. 27, 29. Circumcision being abolished, and baptism coming in the room of it, baptism should be applied to all those, who have any interest in the covenant, as circumcision was. Now that baptism is come in the room of circumcision, seems plain from *Col.* ii. 12. where the Apostle argues, that being baptized, we need not be circumcised: and besides, baptism and circumcision signify the same thing, *i. e.* the removal of sin; one by cutting off, and the other by washing away.

VI. As this seems to manifest the right of the children of christians to these blessings, or that they have an interest in this Covenant, so there are some considerations, which render it very probable, that children should be admitted into the visible church, by the *christian* door of entrance, that is *baptism*. As for instance:

First, the Gospel, which is a dispensation of greater grace, does not lessen, but increase the privileges of the church: it takes away yokes

and burdens indeed, such as circumcision was, *Acts* xv. 10. but does not *diminish* its honours or privileges.

Again, when the father or mother of a family believed in Christ, their households were baptized together with themselves, even where there is no mention, that the household believed in *Christ* also : as in the case of *Lydia* and *Stephanas*, *Acts* xvi. 15. 1 *Cor.* 1. 16. Now children are usually a considerable part of the household.

Yet further, children under the *New Testament* are as capable of receiving the blessings signified, and fulfilling the duties enjoined, as ever they were under the *Old*. It is granted, that they neither could *then*, nor can *now* understand the blessings nor the duties; yet they might receive the Seal of Circumcision, or of Baptism, as a bond laid upon them in infancy, to fulfil the obligations and the duties of riper years, and as an encouragement to wait, and hope for the blessings. This was the case of *Jewish* infants, and why may not *christians* be favoured with it also ?

The Covenant made with *Abraham*, and with his *seed*, *Gen.* xvii. 7. included *Infants*. This Covenant is not repealed or disannulled (II. Ar.) It was intended to extend to *Christians*, and their *seed* (I.) It is confirmed by God to *Christ*, (*Gal.* iii. 17.) i. e. It was made with *Christ*, considered as including all his members in him. As Circumcision of old was the sign of admitting persons into this Covenant ; so now *Baptism* is the *sign* of admitting persons into the *same* individual Covenant (V.) therefore it must be administered to the *same persons*, i. e. to *infants*, as well as to the adult. When the *Covenant* is the *same*, the *privileges* and *promises* the *same*, the *seal* must have been the *same*, if it had not been changed,
and

and the *seed* of *Abraham* to inherit must be the *same* also, unless there is any alteration made in the Gospel. The seed in Covenant included *Infants* are still *part* of that seed of *Abraham*. The seed of *Abraham* had a *right* to the *seal* of the covenant; their *right* still continues as the covenant does; and therefore they are to be admitted, *Infants* in particular, to *Baptism*, the present *seal* of this covenant.

If God thought fit to make any alterations in any circumstance of this Covenant, it seems necessary, that he should give notice of it in the Gospel. Accordingly as he thought fit to change the old sign of circumcision for Baptism, so he has in the Gospel, expressly warned us of the change, *Acts* xv. 24.—xxii. 21, 25. *Gal.* v. 2. 3. And as he chose to make one alteration, with regard to the *persons* to whom the *seal* of the said Covenant should be applied, and to ordain that *females*, as well as males, should be baptized, so he has expressly told us of this alteration in the Gospel, *Acts* viii. 12. xvi. 14, 15. *Gal.* iii. 27, 28. In like manner it must be concluded, that if God would have had a further alteration made, if *Infants* of believing parents, that were formerly to partake of the seal of this Covenant were upon the coming of *Christ*, to partake of it *no more*; undoubtedly God would have given us express warning of it, and have told us in the Gospel, that though *Infants*, before *Christ* came, were in the Covenant, now they are to be *shut out* of it. But as the Gospel says no such thing, it seems to me certain, it cannot be true. It is then incumbent upon those who oppose Infant Baptism, if they would make their point good, positively to prove this by texts, which expressly declare, that *Christ* has *cast Infants* out of the Covenant, though before they were in it. But no such texts

can be produced : therefore it appears, *they continue in Covenant*, and have still a *right* to the *seal* of it, which is *Baptism*.

It will be in vain here to urge, that the *Scripture* sufficiently declares against applying this seal of the *Covenant* to *Infants*, by making *faith* and *repentance* the *conditions* of *Baptism*. For this kind of arguing would as well prove, that *Infants* heretofore were not qualified for *Circumcision*, which yet no man will assert. As this argument would prove too much, it must be looked upon as proving nothing. It will be needful to add as a distinct head, that

VII. The texts which speak of faith as the term of *Baptism*, do not at all imply, that *Infants* are not to be baptized. In the case just now mentioned, there is a parallel between *Baptism* and *Circumcision*. If a heathen heretofore was profelyted to the *Jewish* religion, and did hereupon desire to be circumcised, he was admitted to *Circumcision* upon the account of his faith in the God of *Israel*. And till he professed this faith, he could not lawfully be circumcised. And if a *Jewish prophet* had been inviting a set of heathens to *Judaism*, and *Circumcision*, he would have been forced to talk in such a manner as this, *viz.* "Believe in the one true GOD and ye shall be circumcised. He that believeth, and is circumcised, shall be saved : but he that believeth not, shall be condemned. Repent of your Idolatry, and other sins, and be circumcised. Circumcision now saveth us, not the putting away a bit of flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward the true GOD. Arise then and be circumcised, and put away your sins." In this manner, the *Jewish prophet* must have spoke to his *Heathen audience*. And if he had succeeded, and made profelytes, the history of it must have been expressed

pressed in such language as this, viz. "When the Heathens believed the prophet preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, they were circumcised. A certain *convert* said to the *Jewish* prophet, what should hinder my being circumcised? The prophet answered, If you believe with all your heart, you may. He replied, I believe that there is one GOD, and that *Moses* is his prophet, And hereupon he circumcised him. Others hearing, believed, and were circumcised." This, I apprehend, must have been the language, in case the prophet had preached to a Heathen nation, and profelyted them. And yet, I suppose, that no one would, from this kind of language, infer, that *Infants* were not to be circumcised, or that *actual* faith in God was so universally necessary to *Circumcision*, as that infants were not to receive it, for want of actual faith. As this will be allowed by every one, it must be acknowledged also, by parity of reason, that *the very same expressions*, when in the *same* circumstances applied to Baptism, cannot imply that Infants are not to be *baptized*. All I now contend for is, that they do not even *seem to imply*, that infants are not to be *baptized*; for this they cannot do, unless in the case above represented, they did also imply, that infants were not heretofore to be *circumcised*. As it will be allowed, they would not have implied this, they cannot consistently be thought to imply the other.

If it had been fit to have continued *Circumcision*, as the sign of God's *Covenant*, and *Christ* had actually continued it, when he gave his Apostles a commission to profelyte the *Gentile* nations, I do not see how he could have expressed his thoughts better than this; *Go profelyte all nations, circumcising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, i. e. prove to the Gentiles,*

Gentiles, that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, and when they profess to believe this, *circumcise* them. Would the Apostle, or any one else, have inferred from hence, that Infants, not having actual faith, were not to be circumcised? Nay, rather on the other hand, the Apostle would have reasoned thus: "The sign of GOD's Covenant, *Circumcision*, has hitherto been confined to one nation, even that of the *Israelites*: but now *Christ* has commanded us to extend it to all the nations of the earth. He has ordered us to go and *profelyte all nations*, and circumcise them. Surely it is his intention, that we should take our pattern from the practice of *Circumcision* among the *Jews*. He cannot therefore be supposed to mean, that we must only circumcise grown men, who are capable of believing the Gospel and profess so to do. It is evident he intends, that when we shall have circumcised such, we should next circumcise *their male children*; and that in *after generations*, the males among them should be circumcised the eighth day. Thus it was at the first institution. *Abraham* was first circumcised, then his children, of whatsoever ages they happened to be; and in *after generations* their children were circumcised on the eighth day. This is a direction to us. And when we are bid to go, *profelyte all nations, circumcising them*, we plainly see, we are not forbidden to circumcise Infants; but, on the contrary, are ordered to imitate this example of our Father *Abraham*." I observed, if *Circumcision* had been retained, as the seal of the Covenant, and the same commission had been given to the apostles, as now was given them, only the word *circumcise* used instead of *baptize*, no one would have imagined, that form of expression would in the least have interfered with the *Circumcision* of Infants. It is as certain then that the same form of words, applied

applied to *Baptism*, cannot in the least interfere with the *Baptism of Infants*.

These considerations, I think, *fully* take off the force of *all the objections* that men think they find in the scripture against the baptism of *Infants*. If there be any thing in the *nature* of baptism, as a *seal* of the *Covenant*, which *confines* it to such as *believe*, there must have been the *same* limiting nature in *Circumcision*, which was a *seal* of the *same Covenant*. But as *this* is certainly false, the other cannot be true. If an Infant was not by reason of his age, *unqualified* to receive the sign of *Circumcision*, a *seal of the righteousness of faith*, an Infant cannot now by reason of his age, be consistently thought unqualified for *Baptism*, which is a seal of the *same*.

Farther to confirm this point, if it needs *confirmation*, it may be observed, that *the same forms* of expression, which are urged out of the *New Testament*, to prove that infants are not qualified for *Baptism*, for want of actual faith and repentance, would *equally* prove them unqualified for *salvation*. From *Christ's* saying, *he that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved*, some have inferred, that a person must actually believe, or else he cannot be baptized. With as much strength of reason they might infer, that a person cannot be saved, unless he actually believe! especially since it is added, *He that believeth not shall be damned*. Yet it is acknowledged, that though Infants do not believe, yet they shall not be damned. It is evident then to all, that this text must be interpreted, as speaking *only of the adults*, who were capable of hearing and believing the Gospel. Since then it does not at all speak of Infants, they may be saved, and may be baptized too, notwithstanding they are not believers. The method of proving that they may be *saved without faith*,

faith, will as necessarily demonstrate, that they may be *baptized without their own faith*, notwithstanding any thing that is laid down in this text. Thus all the objections against Infant-Baptism are at once cut off.

VIII. *In the Christian Church from its earliest ages, and we think from the Apostles time, it has been the custom to baptize the infant children of professed christians.*

To prove this, I shall produce a few witnesses, among many. 1. *Justin Martyr*, who wrote about forty years after the Apostles, in his dialogue with *Trypho the Jew*, page 59. plainly speaks of Baptism, as being to *Christians* in the stead of *Circumcision*. And in his *apology for the Christians*, near the beginning, he says, "*Several persons among us of sixty and seventy years old, of both sexes, were discipled [or made disciples to Christ in or from their childhood.*" Please to observe, that *Justin's* word *μαθητευτας* were *discipled* or *made disciples*, is the very same word that had been used by *St. Matthew* xxviii. 19. in expressing our Saviour's command, *μαθητευται, disciple all nations*. And it was done to these persons, *Justin* says, in, or from their childhood. And he wrote that *apology* within forty years of the death of the apostles : and seventy years reckoned back from that time, do reach into the midst of the apostles time.

2. *Irenæus*, born about the time of *St. John's* death, in his treatise, *Adv. Hæres. lib. 2. cap. 3.* speaking of Christ, says, "Not disdaining nor going in a way above human nature, nor breaking in his own person the law which he had set for mankind : but sanctifying every several age by the likeness it has to him. For he came to save all persons by himself : All, I mean, who by him

him are *regenerated* unto God ; *Infants*, and little ones, and children, and youths, and elderly persons. Therefore he went through the several ages : for infants being made an infant, sanctifying Infants, &c."

This testimony, which reckons *Infants* among those that are *regenerated*, is plain and full. Dr. Wall has largely shewn, that the word *regenerating* does, particularly in the writings of *Irenæus*, and in the usual phrase of those times, signify *Baptizing* : he mentions some places, which expressly declare, that *Christ* was *regenerated* by *John* ; meaning that he was *baptized* by him.

Near the time that *Irenæus* wrote the above treatise, *Clemens Alexandrinus* wrote his *Pædagog*, wherein he expressly says, " The word *regeneration* is the name of *Baptism*," (l. 1. c. 6. near the beginning :) his thus plainly declaring, that *regenerating* is the common name for *Baptizing*, does very much confirm the argument taken from *Irenæus*, who asserts, that *Infants* were *regenerated* unto God.

Please to take notice, how near this man was to the Apostles time. *Irenæus* himself says, l. 5. c. 30. that the revelation made to St. *John* in *Patmos*, was but a little before his time, and that revelation was five or six years before St. *John*'s death. In an age so nigh the apostles, and in a place where one of them had so lately lived, the *Christians* could not be ignorant what had been done in their time, in a matter so publick as the baptizing, or not baptizing of Infants.

3. *Origin* is not only exprels for the baptizing of Infants, but gives his reasons for it : in his eighth homily, or sermon, on *Leviticus*, c. 12. he thus says, " Hear *David* speaking ; *I was*, says he, *shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me* : shewing, that every soul that is
born

born in the flesh is polluted with the filth of sin, and iniquity : and that therefore that was said, which we mentioned before ; that *none is free from pollution, tho' his life be but the length of one day.*

Besides all this, let it be considered, what is the reason, that whereas the baptism of the church is given for the forgiveness of sins, *Infants are also by the usage of the church, baptized ;* when, if there was nothing in infants that wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless to them."

Again, in his Homily on *Luke xiv.* he says as follows : " Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins ? or when have they sinned ? Or how can any reason of the laver in their case hold good, but according to that sense that we mentioned even now : *none is free from pollution, tho' his life be but the length of one day upon earth ?* And it is for that reason, because by the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away, that Infants are baptized."

Yet farther, in the fifth book of his commentary on the epistle to the *Romans*, he says thus, " And also in the law it is commanded, that a sacrifice be offered for every child that is born ; *a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons ; of which one is for a sin offering, the other for a burnt-offering.* For what sin is this one pigeon offered ? Can the child that is new born have committed any sin ? It has even *then* sin, for which the sacrifice is commanded to be offered ; from which even he, *whose life is but of one day,* is denied to be free.

For this also it was, that the church had FROM THE APOSTLES AN ORDER to give Baptism to Infants. For they to whom the divine mysteries were committed, knew that there is in all persons the natural pollution of sin, which must be done away by water, and the spirit."

The

The reader is desired to observe, that *Origen* not only says, that it was the *custom of the church* to baptize *Infants*, but he expressly affirms, "That the church received an order from the APOSTLES to give Baptism even to Infants."

There is one circumstance that makes *Origen* a more competent witness to give evidence, whether the baptizing of Infants had been in use, time out of mind, or not, than most other authors that we have left to us of that age; because he was himself of a family that had been *christian* for a long time. The other witnesses that I have mentioned, except *Irenæus*, must have been themselves baptized in adult age; because they were of *heathen* parents. But *Origen's* father was a martyr for *Christ* in the persecution under *Severus* the year after the Apostles, 102. And *Eusebius* (in his history, book 6. ch. 19) assures us that his forefathers had been Christians for several generations.

Now since *Origen* was born in the eighty-fifth year after the Apostles (for he was seventeen years old when his father suffered martyrdom) his grandfather, or at least his great grandfather, must have lived in the Apostles time. And as he could not be ignorant whether he was himself baptized in infancy, so he had no farther than his own family to go, to enquire what was practised in the times of the Apostles.

Besides that, he was a very learned man, and could not be ignorant of the use of the churches; in most of which he had also travelled; for as he was born and bred at *Alexandria*, so it appears out of *Eusebius's* history, B. 6. that he had lived in *Greece*, and at *Rome*, and in *Cappadocia*, and *Arabia*, and spent the main part of his life in *Syria* and *Palestine*.

5. What I apprehend very much strengthens the truth of Infant Baptism, that it is of a divine original, is this, "About one hundred and fifty years

years after the death of St. *John* the Apostle, there was an assembly of sixty six Bishops, who spoke of Infant-Baptism, as a known, established, and uncontested practice." One *Fidus* questioned, whether Infants were to be baptized so soon as within two or three days after their birth, and whether it would not be better to defer their baptism, till they were eight days old, as was observed in *circumcision*; which scruples he proposed to this assembly, and in which he desired their resolution, which they sent in a letter to him: part of which I shall transcribe.

"Cyprian, and the rest of the Bishops, who were present at the council, sixty-six in number, to *Fidus* our brother, greeting,

"We read your letter, most dear brother, ---

"But as to the case of Infants: whereas you judge, *that they must not be baptized within two or three days after they are born; and that the rule of circumcision is to be observed, so that none should be baptized, and sanctified before the eighth day after he is born*: we were all in our assembly of the contrary opinion.

"We judge that no person is to be hindered from obtaining the grace, by the law, that is now appointed; and that the spiritual *circumcision* ought not to be restrained by the *circumcision* that was according to the flesh: but that all are to be admitted to the grace of Christ; since *Peter* speaking in the *Acts* of the Apostles, says, *The Lord has shewn me, that no person is to be called common, or unclean.*

"This therefore, dear brother, was our opinion in the assembly; that it is not for us to hinder, any person from Baptism, and the grace of God, who is merciful, and benign, and affectionate to all. Which rule, as it holds for all, so we think it more especially to be observed in reference to
Infants

Infants newly born : to whom our help and the divine mercy is rather to be granted ; because, by their cries and tears at their first entrance into the world, they do intimate nothing so much, as that they implore compassion."

From this piece of history it appears, that both the persons who moved the doubt, and all the persons who resolved it, *unanimously* agreed in this, that *Infants were to be baptized*, and that it was the settled custom of the church to baptize them. If the assembly had been against Infant Baptism, they would have answer'd ; *It is so far from being necessary to baptize children on the eighth day after their birth, that they ought not to be baptized at all, till they are of age to judge and act for themselves.* But none of those bishops was in this sentiment. They all look'd upon it, as a thing uncontested, that infants were to be baptized.

If we look back from this time to the space that had passed from the apostles time, which was but 150 years, we must conclude, that it was easy then to know the practice of *christians* in the apostles days. For some of these 66 bishops may be thought to be at this time sixty or seventy years old themselves, which reaches almost to half the space : and at that time when they were Infants, there must have been several alive, that were born within the apostles age. And such could not be ignorant, whether infants were baptized in that age, when they themselves were some of those infants. And as there was no dispute, or difference of opinion (as there must have been among so many, if any innovation had been made : for it is here expressly said, *there was not one of Fidus's mind,*) that infant baptism must be delayed till the eighth day ; much less then was there any of opinion, that it was not to be at all.

" In

“ In a doctrinal point, as Mr. *Baxter well observes*, a mistake is easier, than in a bare narration of some one fact : but in a matter of fact of so publick notice, and which so many thousands were partakers in as baptism was, how could they be ignorant ? ”

Suppose it were a question now among us, whether persons were baptized at age only, or in infancy also, eighty years before we were born : were it not easy to know the truth, what by report, and what by records ?

I shall conclude what I have to remark on this testimony with observing, that we see here confirmed, what was said before, that baptism was reckoned to be to *christians* in the room of circumcision. For it was upon that account, that *Fidus* thought it must be the time of the old circumcision ; and the Bishops of the council, tho’ denying that, do call it the *spiritual* [or christian] *circumcision*.

6. *Ambrose* commenting on those words, *Luke* i. 17. where the angel prophesies of *John* the Baptist, *he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias*, after having shewn in several particulars, how *John*, in his office, did resemble *Elias*, and having mentioned that miracle of *Elias* dividing the river *Jordan*, adds thus ; “ But perhaps this may seem to be fulfilled in our time, and in the apostles time. For that returning of the river waters backward toward the spring-head, which was caused by *Elias*, when the river was divided (as the scripture says, *Jordan was driven back*) signified the sacrament of the laver of salvation, which was afterwards to be instituted ; by which those *Infants that are baptized*, are reformed reformed back again from wickedness [or a corrupt state] to the primitive state of their nature.”

He

He means they are freed from the guilt of original sin, and in some sense reduced back to the primitive state, in which man was, before that happened. He plainly speaks of *Infants, as baptized in the Apostles time*, as well as in his own; and makes St. *John*, in baptizing infants for the reformation of their nature to the primitive purity of it, to resemble *Elias* in turning back the waters to their spring-head.

Austin, in his treatise *De Baptismo contra Donatistas*, lib. 4. C. 23. having had occasion to speak of the penitent thief, who obtained salvation without baptism, shews, that is no more an argument against the necessity of baptism, where it may be had, than the example of *baptized Infants* obtaining salvation without *faith*, is an argument against the necessity of *faith*, where the subject is capable of it. Near the conclusion of the fourth book, he says, "And as the thief who by necessity went without baptism, was saved, because, by his piety, he had it spiritually: so where baptism is had, tho' the party by necessity go without that [faith] which the thief had, yet he is saved. Which the *whole body of the church* holds, as delivered to them, in the case of little infants baptized: who certainly cannot yet believe with the heart to righteousness, or confess with the mouth to salvation, as the thief could; nay, by their crying and noise, while the sacrament is administering, they disturb the holy mysteries: and yet *no christian man of any sort* will say, they are baptized to no purpose.

And if any one do ask for divine authority in this matter, though that which the whole church practises, and which has not been instituted by councils, but was ever in use, is very reasonably believed

believed to be no other than a thing *ordered by the authority of the Apostles*: yet we may besides take a true estimate, how much the sacrament of baptism does avail infants, by the circumcision which God's former people received." In what follows, he most plainly declares, that baptism is to the Christian infants, as circumcision was to the *Jewish*.

Though *Austin* speaks of Infant-Baptism in this place but occasionally, his words are a full evidence, that it was then universally practised, and had been so beyond the memory of any man, or of any record: that they took it to be a thing that had not been *enacted by any council*, but had *been in use from the beginning of Christianity*. And they had then but 300 years to look back to the times of the Apostles, whereas we now have upwards of 1600. And many writings, and records, which are now lost, were then extant, and easily known.

It deserves a particular remark, that most of these witnesses for Infant-Baptism, were not only faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, but were faithful unto death, joyfully suffering martyrdom for the truth: surely, this is a great accession to the strength of their testimony.

All these things put together, seem to prove, that Infant-Baptism was practised in the church of Christ from the *beginning*, and consequently that it is of an *apostolical* and *divine* original,

As for the first four hundred years, there appears only one man, *Tertullian*, that advised the delay of Infant-Baptism *in some cases*, and one *Gregory*, that did perhaps practice such delay in the case of his children; but no society of men so thinking, or so practising: so in the next seven hundred years, there is not so much as *one man* to be found, that either spoke for, or practised
such

such delay. But all the contrary. And when one sect among the *Waldenses* declared against the baptizing of infants, as being incapable of salvation, the main body of that people rejected their opinion : and those of them that held that opinion, quickly dwindled away, and disappeared ; there being no more heard of holding that tenet, till the rising of the *German* antipædobaptists, in the year 1522. “ And all the national churches now in the world do profess and practice Infant-baptism.”

This brings to my remembrance a very clear proof for the baptism of Infants, which much satisfied the mind of the great and good Mr. *Baxter* ; I shall relate it in his own words. “ I am fully satisfied, that Mr. *Tombs* cannot shew me any society (I think not one man) that ever opened their mouths against baptism of infants, till about 200 years ago, or thereabout which confirms me much, that it is from the apostles times, or else some one would have been found as an opposer of it ; even as I profess seriously, that it much satisfieth my conscience, that Christ and his apostles did never shut the infants of believing *Jews* (and consequently not of believing *Gentiles*) from being members of his visible church in that I never find in all the New Testament one word of exception, arguing, murmuring, or dissatisfaction against it ; when as it cannot possibly be conceived, but those *Jews* who kept such a stir before they would let go Circumcision, the sign of church-membership, when yet they had baptism, another sign, would undoubtedly have been much more scandaliz'd at the unchurching of all their children, and would have, much hardlier have let go that privilege of their church membership, or at least have raised some scruple about it, which might have occasioned one word of satisfaction from some one of the apostles ;
especially

especially when *Paul* calls them holy, and *Christ* saith, *Suffer them to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.* I know not how *Mr. T——*, and such others think on these things ; but, for my part, they stick so close to my conscience, that I dare not say, *Christ* would have no infants received into his visible church among the number of *Christians*, when I find he once placed them in the church ; and neither *Mr. T——*, nor any man breathing, can shew me one word of scripture where ever *Christ* did put them out again ; and yet these men pretend to stand to the determination of scripture. I would this one thing were impartially considered."

With regard to the mode of baptizing, I would only add, *Christ* no where, as far as I can find, requires *dipping* but only *baptizing* ; which word, many most eminent for learning and piety, have declared, signifies to *pour on*, or *sprinkle*, as well as to *dip*. As our Lord has graciously given us a word of such extensive meaning, doubtless the parent, or the person to be baptized, if he be adult, ought to choose which way he best approves. What *GOD* has left *indifferent* it becomes not *man* to make necessary.

I think it proper in this place to subjoin what *Dr. Watts* has declared concerning the signification of this word. "The *Greek* word *Baptize*, (says he) signifies to *wash* any thing properly by water coming over it : Now there are several ways of such washing, (*viz.*) *sprinkling* water on it in a small quantity, *pouring* water on it in a larger quantity, or *dipping* it under water, either in part or in whole : And since this seems to be left undetermined in scripture to one particular mode ; therefore any of these ways of washing may be sufficient to answer the purpose of this ordinance. Now that the *Greek* word signifies *washing* a thing in general by water coming over it,

it, and not always *dipping*, is argued by learned men, not only from ancient *Greek* authors, but from the *New Testament* itself, as *Luke xi. 38.* *The Pharisees marvelled that Jesus had not first washed before dinner.* In *Greek* that he was not first *baptized*; and can it be supposed, that they would have him *dip* himself in water? *Mark vii.*

4. *The Pharisees, when they come from the market, eat not except they are washed.* In *Greek*, except they are *baptized*; surely it cannot mean *except they were dipped*. And if this should be restrained to signify *washing their hands only*, yet it does not signify necessarily *dipping* them; for the manner of washing their hands of old, was by *pouring water* on them, as *Elisha poured water on the hands of Elijah*, 2 *Kings iii. 11.* Yet further they practised the *washing of tables* (in *Greek*, *baptism of beds*) as well as *cups and vessels*. Now *beds* could not usually be washed by *dipping*, *Heb. ix. 10.* The *Jews* had divers washings prescribed by *Moses*, (in *Greek*, *baptisms*) which were *sprinkling* and *pouring water* on things, as well as plunging them all over in water. *The children of Israel were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and the sea, in their passage thro' the red-sea, at their march from Egypt*, 1 *Cor. xii. 2.* Not that they were *dipped* in the water, but they were *sprinkled* by the clouds over their heads, and perhaps by the water which stood up in heaps as they passed by.

Besides, pouring or sprinkling more naturally represents most of the spiritual blessings signified by baptism (*viz*) the sprinkling the blood of *Christ* on the conscience, or the pouring out of the spirit on the person baptized, or sprinkling him with clean water, as an emblem of the influence of the spirit; all which are the things signified in baptism, as different representations of the cleansing away of the guilt or defilement of sin thereby.

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I conclude, since this controversy has difficulties attending it, persons of an honest and sincere soul, in searching out the truth, may happen to run into different opinions: but the things wherein we agree, are so important, as should not suffer us to quarrel about the lesser things wherein we differ. Our brethren, who reject infant-baptism, as well as we who practise it, all agree in a belief of the sacred institution of this ordinance: we all agree, that children should be devoted to God, and should be partakers of all the privileges which scripture admits, and that they should grow up under all possible obligations to duty: and since each of us desires to find out the will of Christ, and practise it accordingly, it is a most unreasonable thing, that we should be angry with each other, because some of us are devoted to God and Christ by this ceremony, a little *sooner* or a little *later* than others; or because some devote their children to God in baptism, as a claim of privileges, and an obligation to duties, before they can do this for themselves, and are capable of acting therein: or because some of us think, this ordinance requires much water, and that the whole body be immersed in it; others suppose, a little is sufficient, and that he who hath the face or head washed in this solemnity, has as true a significancy of gospel benefits and obligations, as he, who has his whole body put under water, since our Saviour thought so when he washed *Peter's* feet, *John* xiii. 10. In short, where faith in Christ, and love to God, and obedience to the sanctifying operations of the spirit, are made necessary to salvation, and agreed upon by us all, it is pity that these lesser things should raise such unhappy contentions among the disciples of the blessed Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

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